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Fourteenth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia

I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 1712 (2006), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) until 31 March 2007 and requested me to provide information on progress made in meeting the broad benchmarks outlined in my report of 12 September 2006 (S/2006/743). The present report provides an update on major developments in Liberia and of the progress made towards meeting the key benchmarks for the consolidation and drawdown of UNMIL since my report of 11 December 2006 (S/2006/958).

II. Major political developments

2. The overall political situation in Liberia remained relatively stable during the period under review. On 16 January 2007, in an address to mark the anniversary of her administration's first year in office, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf highlighted the restoration of peace, the progress made in economic recovery, the growth in public revenue, the partial restoration of health services, the increase in school enrolment and the provision of electricity and pipe-borne water to some parts of Monrovia as the main achievements of her Government to date. She also identified the many challenges ahead, including the creation of employment opportunities, the rehabilitation of roads and the strengthening of national capacities to implement her Government's reform agenda. On 29 January, in her annual address to the Legislature on the state of the nation, the President expressed her intention to submit 10 concessions and acts for legislative approval, including the governance reform commission bill, the national defence bill and the draft anti-corruption statute.

3. The work of the Legislature was hampered by divisions in the House of Representatives over calls for the removal of Edwin Snowe from the post of Speaker of the House. The group of legislators calling for his removal claimed that he no longer enjoyed the confidence of members of the House and accused him of bringing the House into disrepute through activities that were inconsistent with legislative practice. The divisions within the House resulted in two groups of legislators meeting at separate venues.

4. On 18 January, 43 members of the House of Representatives at a meeting in Virginia, just outside Monrovia, passed a resolution to remove Mr. Snowe from the

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position of Speaker. In response, on 22 January, Mr. Snowe filed a petition for a writ of prohibition in the Supreme Court, arguing that the procedure adopted in the passage of the resolution denied him due process, and that the sitting parliament had passed the resolution in a venue that breached article 40 of the Constitution, which provides for both Houses of the Legislature to sit in the same city. Mr. Snowe also alleged that members of the House of Representatives had been bribed by the Executive to remove him from office. Although the Supreme Court granted Mr. Snowe's petition, he eventually resigned on 15 February, as the number of legislators demanding his removal continued to increase. The Deputy Speaker was designated to act until the election of a new Speaker.

5. The events leading up to the resignation of the Speaker affected proceedings in both the House and the Senate, in particular the passage and enactment of draft legislation. It also increased tensions between the three branches of Government. In the meantime, the International Contact Group on Liberia, some legislators and members of civil society have called for an independent and transparent investigation into the allegations of bribery made by the Speaker.

6. On 6 February, the National Elections Commission organized a by-election to fill the vacant House of Representatives seat for District Number 6 in Nimba County. No candidate obtained the absolute majority required to be declared the winner. As a result, on 20 February, a run-off by-election was held between two candidates from the ruling Unity Party and the Liberian Action Party, which had both secured the highest votes. On 21 February, the Unity Party candidate was declared the winner.

7. As part of the Government's anti-corruption campaign, the former Chairman of the now defunct National Transitional Government of Liberia, Charles Gyude Bryant, together with several former ministers and deputy ministers who were implicated in the report on economic crimes prepared by a team of investigators from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) during the transitional period, were charged with financial malfeasance during the period under review. The former Vice-Chairman of the Transitional Government, Wesley Momo Johnson, was also interrogated by the Liberian National Police in connection with findings in the same report. On 17 February, the Supreme Court ordered the execution of a search warrant to secure the financial records of six former Finance Ministry personnel from the Transitional Government, who are being prosecuted for embezzlement of public funds. On 2 March, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Edwin Snowe, was also questioned by the police in connection with allegations that he misappropriated some US$ 1 million from the Liberia Petroleum Refinery Company while serving as managing director during the transitional period.

8. The risk of localized inter-ethnic conflicts resulting from property and land disputes remains a major source of concern. On 22 January, some 50 members of the Mandingo ethnic group from Nimba County staged a demonstration in front of President Johnson-Sirleaf's office in Monrovia, demanding to talk to the President about land disputes between them and members of the Gio and Mano ethnic groups. The President received the group's leadership to discuss their concerns. In the meantime, the Presidential Commission that was established to investigate the inter-ethnic land and property disputes in Nimba County submitted its report to the President. The Commission recommended, inter alia, the urgent institution of

mechanisms to reconcile feuding communities. The President subsequently requested the Commission to share its recommendations with the residents of Nimba County, during which the key recommendations were accepted. The President has since ordered the restitution of contested properties in Nimba County to their rightful owners and requested UNMIL to assist in repairing roads designated for commercial activities in the area.

9. The political and economic tensions in Guinea have been a source of concern. On 14 and 15 December 2006, President Johnson-Sirleaf and President Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah of Sierra Leone visited Conakry to meet with President Lansana Conté to discuss subregional issues, including the revitalization of the Mano River Union. On 20 February, the two Presidents returned to Conakry where they discussed with President Conté the political crisis in Guinea, including reports about the possible involvement of Liberian ex-combatants in the disturbances in Guinea. The Presidents agreed to reactivate the Mano River Union security units in all three countries to facilitate information-sharing and to ensure border security. Following her return to Monrovia, President Johnson-Sirleaf made a statement to the press advising that any Liberian who crossed the border to take part in the conflict in Guinea would be in violation of Liberian laws.

III. Security situation

10. The overall security situation in Liberia has remained generally calm and stable. However, deactivated security personnel and retrenched employees of the National Ports Authority staged demonstrations to protest the non-payment of outstanding benefits, including salary arrears. In one such incident, on 8 February, some 500 deactivated army, police and security personnel organized a violent demonstration in Monrovia, which disrupted the flow of traffic and normal business activities. They demanded to meet with President Johnson-Sirleaf regarding the payment of benefits. The Liberian National Police, supported by the United Nations police and formed police units, brought these incidents under control.

11. Criminal activities, including armed robbery, decreased significantly in Monrovia and its environs, while the number of reported cases of rape increased during the reporting period. The reduction in reported criminal activities was due to "Operation Sweeping Wave", which was mounted by UNMIL, the Liberian National Police and other national security agencies to address the problem of violent crime in Monrovia. The operation involved the conduct of cordon and search activities, and increased day and night patrols in high crime areas. In a separate joint operation named "Spider Web", which was launched in December to curb criminal activities during the festive period, several checkpoints were set up in strategic locations throughout Monrovia to conduct random checks on vehicles.

12. On 10 December, UNMIL carried out the second phase of "Exercise Tight Grip" to test the Mission's capabilities and operational readiness to respond to a possible serious deterioration in the security situation in the country. The first phase of the exercise was carried out in Monrovia in October 2006.

13. The security situation along the borders with Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea remained stable with no visible threat to the stability of Liberia, despite rumours about the possible involvement of Liberian ex-combatants in the disturbances in Guinea and unconfirmed reports about cross-border movements of

Liberian ex-combatants into Côte d'Ivoire. However, the continuing uncertainty in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea continues to present a potential threat to stability in Liberia. UNMIL has continued to coordinate with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and with the Guinean military forces to monitor the security situation in border areas. UNMIL conducted concurrent patrols with the Guinean authorities along the Liberian-Guinean border in "Operation Seskin 2" from 22 to 30 January and, without the Guinean authorities, in "Operation Seskin 3" from 19 to 23 February. Similar concurrent patrols along the Liberian-Sierra Leonean border were conducted with the Sierra Leonean authorities in "Operation Loko 3". These exercises were aimed at demonstrating the presence of United Nations security forces in the border areas, deterring illegal cross-border movements, establishing cross-border liaison and reassuring the local populations while fostering better coordination among the security agencies deployed in the border areas.

IV. Deployment of the Mission

A. Military component

14. As at 1 March, UNMIL troop strength stood at 14,832 out of an authorized strength of 15,125. A company of the quick reaction force from Pakistan comprising 250 personnel arrived in the Mission on 23 December 2006 to replace the Swedish quick reaction force, which departed in October 2006. In addition to the activities described in paragraphs 11 to 13 above, UNMIL continued to provide security throughout the country. The Mission undertook several additional cordon and search operations to retrieve weapons, extended support to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) community arms collection for development programme, carried out air and ground patrols, especially along Liberia's borders, and assisted in the rehabilitation of roads and bridges. It also provided security support to the Special Court in accordance with Security Council resolution 1626 (2005). In addition, the UNMIL quick reaction force conducted "Exercise Green Horizon" from 22 to 28 January, which was aimed at reinforcing the security of the Special Court.

B. Police component

15. As at 1 March, the Mission's police strength stood at 1,201 officers out of an authorized ceiling of 1,240 officers, and included 574 United Nations police advisers, 604 officers in 5 formed police units, 17 corrections officers and 6 immigration officers. The fifth formed police unit, from India, comprising 105 women and 20 men, arrived in the Mission on 30 January. This unit is the first predominantly female police unit deployed in the history of the United Nations. During the reporting period, the UNMIL police component continued to mentor, monitor, advise, train and support the Liberian National Police. It supported the efforts of the Liberian National Police to contain threats to public order in Monrovia and other urban centres, as well as on rubber plantations. It also provided basic and specialized training for Liberian National Police personnel and immigration and naturalization officers.

C. Adjustments of the Mission

16. Given the relative stability that has prevailed since the inauguration of the new Government and based on the detailed assessment provided in the tenth progress report on UNMIL (S/2006/159), which remains valid, one infantry battalion from Ethiopia was withdrawn from UNMIL on 17 December 2006. Following the departure of this battalion, the operational boundaries between sectors 1, 2 and 3 were realigned, which affected the deployment of troops in Margibi, Bong and Nimba Counties. Further adjustments, including the withdrawal of another infantry battalion, will be considered in 2007, security conditions permitting. Any further drawdown will be guided by progress made in the implementation of the UNMIL mandate and in meeting the benchmarks for consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal, which are set out in section V.

V. Status of implementation of the mandate of the Mission and the benchmarks for the consolidation, drawdown and withdrawal of the Mission

A. Training, restructuring and reform of the Liberian National Police

17. The restructuring and training of the Liberian National Police continued to make steady progress. To date, 2,610 Liberian National Police have been trained and deployed while 358 Special Security Services personnel and 210 Seaport Police officers have graduated from the National Police Academy. As at 1 March, 736 police recruits were receiving field training, while 184 were undergoing basic training. The Mission has intensified its recruitment efforts in order to achieve the target of 3,500 fully trained Liberian National Police personnel by July 2007.

18. In order to ensure the recruitment of qualified women into the police force, an educational support programme for female police candidates, funded by the Netherlands, was launched on 20 January. The programme, which is a joint initiative of the Government of Liberia and UNMIL, aims at improving the educational qualifications of women under the age of 35 years who are interested in joining the police force. Successful applicants will attend an intensive three-month programme to achieve a high school equivalency diploma. As at 1 March, 309 applications had been received.

19. In continuing efforts to further enhance the capacity of the Liberian National Police, the United Nations police are conducting in-service driver certification training for national police personnel, as well as job specific training for 32 officers of the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization and senior management courses for 39 officers.

20. The Government of Liberia has decided to establish, over the next five years, a 500-strong police quick-reaction force in addition to the 3,500 police personnel referred to in paragraph 17. This specialized unit, whose personnel will be drawn initially from the 200-strong Liberian National Police Support Unit, will have the capacity to respond quickly, efficiently and robustly to major breaches of internal security. A team of Liberian National Police officers and United Nations police

visited Sierra Leone on 26 January and Ghana on 8 February to draw lessons from the police quick reaction force in those countries.

21. The deployment of the Liberian National Police to the interior of the country continues to be hampered by the absence of basic infrastructure and the lack of police equipment, including vehicles and communications. Currently, 537 newly trained Liberian National Police personnel have been deployed to Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu, Bong, Nimba, Lofa, Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, River Cess, Maryland, Grand Kru and River Gee Counties. In addition, plans are under way to deploy police officers to all county headquarters and newly constructed police stations before December.

22. International partners continue to assist the Government in addressing the logistical challenges facing the police force, but further support from donors is required. On 11 December 2006, UNDP provided nine vehicles to the Liberian National Police. In addition, with bilateral assistance provided by the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the United States of America and, through UNMIL quick-impact projects, three police stations at Zorzor in Lofa County, Greenville in Sinoe County and Zone 5/Depot 6 in Montserrado County were constructed and handed over to the Liberian National Police. The rehabilitation of the police stations at Bopolu in Gbarpolu County, Voinjama in Lofa County and Robertsport in Grand Cape Mount County are at advanced stages of completion. Some refurbishment work was also carried out at the Liberian National Police Headquarters in Monrovia. Furthermore, police stations are being reconstructed and rehabilitated in Kolahun and Foya in Lofa County, Yekepa and Tapeta in Nimba County, Arthington Town and Schefflin in Montserrado County, Sinje in Grand Cape Mount County, Unification Town in Margibi County, Morweh in River Cess County, Krowroeken in River Gee County, Owensgrove in Grand Bassa County, Salala in Bong County and Toe Town in Grand Gedeh County. In the meantime, the bids for the construction of new police stations at Buchanan in Grand Bassa County, Harper in Maryland County and Zwedru in Grand Gedeh County have been awarded. Notwithstanding these efforts, many more police facilities still need urgent rehabilitation.

B. Training, restructuring and reform of the armed forces of Liberia

23. The United States continues to lead the international support for the training and restructuring of the armed forces of Liberia. The first batch of 106 soldiers who graduated from basic training at the Barclays Training Centre in Monrovia in November 2006 is now undergoing advanced individual training, with 44 attending the basic non-commissioned officer course, 23 undergoing medical training and another 38 scheduled to begin other military occupational speciality training courses. Training for the second batch of recruits has been postponed from January to April. This delay is a cause for concern given that the rebuilding of Liberia's armed forces is a critical benchmark for the Mission's exit strategy. It would, therefore, be important to accelerate this programme.

C. Development of a national security strategy and architecture

24. President Johnson-Sirleaf has requested the Governance Reform Commission to conduct comprehensive national consultations on developing a national security strategy and architecture. The Commission has held several rounds of consultations with security agencies, Government bodies, international partners and civil society. The Commission's report is expected to be issued in early 2007, following which the Government will articulate its national security policy and architecture. In the meantime, UNMIL is working with the Government to establish a county network for security coordination and reporting.

D. Reintegration of ex-combatants

25. Completing the reintegration of the remaining caseload of ex-combatants remains a key factor in the UNMIL exit strategy. As at 1 March, some 75,000 out of 101,874 demobilized former combatants have either completed, are currently participating in or are registered for reintegration programmes. This includes 11,000 ex-combatants who signed up for formal education courses that started in November 2006, and 3,500 beneficiaries who registered for 8 new vocational skills training projects. Five of the training projects have commenced, while another three are expected to begin shortly. However, some 23,000 ex-combatants are still waiting to be provided with reintegration opportunities under bilaterally funded programmes, while 911 are waiting to be covered under the Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration Trust Fund managed by UNDP. The reintegration programme for children associated with the fighting forces, which is coordinated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), has so far provided reintegration opportunities to 9,704 of the 11,000 child beneficiaries. This includes 4,967 children who have graduated or are currently participating in the community education investment programme and 4,737 beneficiaries who are undergoing or have graduated from vocational training.

26. UNMIL continued to actively collect and destroy residual weapons and ammunition that were voluntarily surrendered or discovered through search operations. Since the end of the disarmament and demobilization programme in 2005, 632 weapons, 77,504 rounds of ammunition, 1,187 pieces of unexploded ordnance and 11,674 assorted spares and miscellaneous parts have been collected and destroyed. In addition, the UNDP community arms collection for development programme has collected 240 rifles and guns, 20,830 rounds of ammunition, 598 magazines, bayonets and spares and 294 pieces of unexploded ordnance since its launch in January 2006.

E. Consolidation of State authority

27. Progress in the consolidation of State authority throughout the country remains slow. The county support teams, which were established by the international partners and the Government in each county, continue to assist in building the capacities of local authorities to assess, plan, coordinate and deliver basic services. The teams, which comprise representatives from UNMIL, the United Nations country team, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, county administration, Government line ministries and non-governmental institutions, meet on a monthly basis in each

of the 15 counties to develop action plans to address the needs of each county. The teams have developed long-term capacity-building strategies for all superintendents and assistant superintendents for development, and have agreed to assist in the rehabilitation of seven and construction of four administrative buildings in the counties, in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development. In the meantime, UNDP has donated vehicles to each county superintendent and assistant superintendent for development. Notwithstanding these efforts, the work of the county officials and Government line ministry representatives continues to be seriously hampered by a lack of communications, office equipment, accommodation, vehicles and good roads.

F. Management of natural resources

28. The Government continued to take action to regain control over and efficiently manage the country's natural resources for the benefit of the people of Liberia. Since the enactment of the new national forestry reform law, the Government has further developed legislation required for restarting large-scale commercial logging and, with the support of UNMIL, has embarked on a vigorous public sensitization campaign about this legislation. It is also in the process of recruiting a private company to manage the chain of custody system for forestry logs in accordance with the provisions of the new law. In the meantime, the United Kingdom Department for International Development has provided funding for the development of comprehensive legislation on community forestry, which should enable the Government to address the issues of community rights and benefits.

29. As part of its efforts to meet the requirements for the lifting of sanctions, the Government has applied to join the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme and requested that a Kimberley Process review mission visit Liberia as soon as possible. With the support of UNMIL, the Government has completed the construction of a diamond office in Monrovia and regional diamond certification offices in six counties. Canada, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and the United States, as well as the De Beers diamond company are assisting the Government with the training of Liberia Diamond Authority personnel. The Government has also finalized an iron ore mining concession agreement with Acelor-Mittal, valued at $1 billion, which will pave the way for the reopening of the iron ore mines in Nimba County, as well as the rehabilitation of the Yekepa-Buchanan railroad and the Buchanan port.

30. UNMIL collaborated with the Ministry of Lands, Mines and Energy to finalize a sand mining policy, which provides for the establishment of sites that are suitable for sustainable sand mining. The policy is aimed at preventing coastal erosion, in particular in Monrovia, where illegal and indiscriminate sand mining has been taking place. UNMIL also assisted the Government in identifying and assessing potential sites for sand mining, while its force engineers are assisting in the rehabilitation of roads leading to these sites.

31. UNMIL continued to support the Government in re-establishing security in disputed rubber plantations within the framework of the joint Government of Liberia/UNMIL rubber plantation task force. Since the Government took control of the Guthrie Rubber Plantation in August 2006, the security situation on the plantation has remained stable, with UNMIL and the Liberian National Police

providing security for the management of the plantation. At Cocopa plantation, security remains a source of serious concern as conflicts persist between the plantation management and the local communities. UNMIL has deployed military and police personnel to support the Liberian National Police stationed at the plantation, where the use of shotguns is commonplace. In the meantime, the appointment by the Government of an interim management team for the Cocopa plantation in January has been legally challenged. The Government, in consultation with UNMIL, is also taking measures to address the security problems at the Sinoe rubber plantation.

G. Promotion of human rights and the rule of law

1. Promotion of human rights

32. During the reporting period, UNMIL continued its human rights promotion, protection and monitoring activities throughout the country. Although the overall human rights situation in the country continues to improve, major challenges remain, in particular in the area of prisons, the judiciary and the juvenile justice system. The work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission also continues to be hampered by mismanagement and financial constraints.

33. Very weak rule of law institutions continue to impede the administration of justice. The judicial system lacks qualified personnel, infrastructure, logistic support and basic office supplies. Court officials often apply legal rules and procedures in an inconsistent manner or fail to observe minimum human rights standards. In addition, corrupt practices involving some magistrates and judicial officials, inefficiency and prolonged pre-trial detention continued to be observed throughout the country. Despite denunciations by the Ministry of Justice, the practice of trial by ordeal remains common in some remote areas of the country, in part because of the absence of courts and police services. In an effort to strengthen the capacity of the judiciary, the Government has provided 20 vehicles for the use of circuit court judges across the country.

34. Detention conditions are still below minimum human rights standards. Some correction facilities, including the Monrovia Central Prison, are overcrowded because of delays in bringing cases to trial. As a result of staff shortages and poor working conditions, the number of jailbreaks increased during the reporting period.

35. Although there has been an increase in the number of rape cases tried by the circuit courts, the relevant provisions of the Rape Amendment Act are still not being uniformly applied by magistrates and judges. In addition, many cases are not being investigated or brought before competent courts.

36. The juvenile justice system remains a source of serious concern. In several counties, juveniles continued to be held in long-term pre-trial detention with adults without indictment or trial, while in other counties, juveniles have been tried by the magistrate courts.

37. The orphanages that were declared illegal and listed for closure by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in 2006 continued to operate. Conditions in these unaccredited homes are below the minimum standard required for the healthy development of children and their protection from exploitation.

38. Since my previous report, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has not made much headway in implementing its mandate. Although some progress was made in the identification and recruitment of key staff, a numbers of posts remain vacant. In addition, the only member of the International Technical Advisory Committee who was resident in Liberia resigned his appointment. The Commission's operations are hampered by financial and logistical constraints, as well as by shortcomings in its management. Donors recently rejected the draft budget prepared by the Commission because of concerns about lack of transparency in the previous disbursement of funds. In an effort to resolve these problems, on 23 January, the International Contact Group on Liberia wrote to the Chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to recommend the establishment of a working group, to be composed of representatives, of the Contact Group, including the United Nations, and the Commission. The Chairman has since agreed to the establishment of the working group, but with a larger membership. The first meeting of the working group was to take place on 8 March. In the meantime, the Commission's plans to commence public hearings in Monrovia have been suspended.

39. During the reporting period, some progress was made towards the establishment of the Independent National Commission on Human Rights. On 17 January, the Independent Selection Panel, which was established to vet nominees, submitted a short-list of candidates to the President for consideration. Owing to the delay in the vetting and selection process, UNMIL was unable to proceed with planned activities, including training of the Commissioners and staff members in human rights law and investigation.

2. Support for the judicial system

40. During the reporting period, the number of trials for serious offences such as murder, rape and armed robbery increased. The first rape case to be tried since the end of the conflict was concluded in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, and several high-profile corruption cases involving several former senior Government officials were prosecuted. This increase in judicial activity was partially due to the engagement of national lawyers, with UNMIL support, to serve as prosecutors and public defenders. The Minister of Justice and the Chief Justice have since requested that the lawyers be engaged for a further six months. Despite these developments, the justice system continues to be constrained by the lack of court buildings and a dearth of qualified judicial and legal officers, which have resulted in serious delays in the processing of criminal cases.

41. UNMIL continued its capacity-building activities by providing training for legal and judicial officers. Since May 2006, 330 magistrates have been trained by UNMIL. The Mission is currently assisting the Chief Justice in identifying the training needs of circuit court judges and other judicial personnel. Meanwhile, the Governance Reform Commission has prepared a draft paper on legal and judicial reforms required in the justice sector.

3. Support for the corrections system

42. UNMIL continued to assist the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Corrections to improve the conditions of correctional facilities throughout the country. The refurbishment work on the facilities, being funded by Norway and the United States, is at various stages of completion. The construction of a new cell block at the Monrovia Central Prison is also in the final stages of completion, while the first phase of the refurbishment of the National Palace of Corrections in Zwedru and the rehabilitation of the Bondiway Prison have been completed. In collaboration with UNMIL, the Government is in the process of reviewing the security and logistical needs of the Zwedru facility. In addition, with the assistance of the UNMIL quick-impact project funds, the refurbishment of the Buchanan Prison has been completed while the rehabilitation of the facilities in Voinjama and Sanniquellie is ongoing. The World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross and other partners continued to provide foodstuff and other supplies to the prisoners.

43. Since the training programme for corrections officers commenced in February 2005, UNMIL has trained 79 corrections officers. During the reporting period, 25 correction officers completed their basic training at the Police Academy and are currently undergoing practical training at correctional facilities. UNMIL has also provided these officers with training in HIV/AIDS, gender mainstreaming, fire safety and equipment and first aid.

44. Owing to budgetary constraints, the Government has only absorbed 25 of the 79 newly trained corrections officers into the civil service. However, in response to the frequent incidents of escape from prisons, which have been attributed to an acute shortage of trained corrections officers, President Johnson-Sirleaf has recently committed to absorbing 55 corrections officers into the civil service in 2007, and to ensuring better conditions of service for corrections staff. The Government has also procured new uniforms for these officers.

H. Economic governance

45. The Government continued to make steady progress in the implementation of the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme. The Economic Governance Steering Committee met regularly to monitor progress in the implementation of the Programme. It also continued to review the monthly status reports on the activities of the internationally recruited experts. During the period under review, the Senate confirmed the Government's nominee for the position of Auditor-General at the General Auditing Commission, which is being funded by the European Commission. A non-governmental organization was selected to conduct a nationwide campaign, sponsored by the World Bank, to raise awareness about the Programme. In addition, the Government, in collaboration with international partners, completed an internal review of the implementation of the Programme after its first year of operation and released a status report, which was published on the Programme's website (www.gemapliberia.org). The progress highlighted in the report includes improvements in Government financial management and expenditure, as well as increased transparency in the management of State-owned enterprises.

46. The Contracts and Concessions Review Committee of the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission completed its review of 186 contracts and

concessions entered into by the National Transitional Government of Liberia by the 31 December 2006 deadline established by President Johnson-Sirleaf. A local lawyer and an international lawyer provided by UNMIL conducted legal reviews of 23 of these contracts. Of the 186 contracts reviewed, the Committee recommended the acceptance of 52, the renegotiation of 14 and the cancellation of 29. The Committee was unable to examine 3 telecommunications agreements and 44 lease agreements because of the absence of technical experts, while another 44 contracts from different sectors could not be comprehensively reviewed because of missing documentation. At a meeting of the Steering Committee on 24 January, the President instructed that the three telecommunications agreements should be nullified for violating Government procurement procedures and laws.

47. The Government's commitment to improving economic governance continued to yield positive results. According to the Ministry of Finance, the Government realized $114 million in revenue in 2006, which represented a 48 per cent increase from the $77 million collected in the previous year. This marked improvement resulted from the fiscal reforms and regulatory measures adopted by the Government.

I. National recovery, reconstruction and development

48. On 13 February, the Government of Liberia convened a Liberia Partners' Forum to review progress made on its recovery and reconstruction agenda, as well as to solicit feedback on the strategic priorities outlined in its interim poverty reduction strategy and discuss financing requirements and mechanisms. The Forum, which took place in Washington, D.C., was sponsored by the African Development Bank (ADB), the European Commission, the International Monetary Fund, the United Nations, the World Bank and the United States. During the Forum, Germany and the United States pledged to forgive Liberia's bilateral debt, while the United Kingdom agreed to provide 10 per cent of the funds needed to clear Liberia's arrears with ADB. Other international partners promised to support the Government's efforts to eliminate its external debt. I encourage the international community to translate the tremendous goodwill expressed at the Forum into tangible resources that could be used to address the priority needs of the country.

49. During a one-day visit to Liberia, on 1 February, President Hu Jintao of China signed a number of bilateral economic agreements with the Government and announced the cancellation of Liberia's US$ 10 million dollars debt. In addition, President Hu gave Liberia a $1.5 million cash grant and pledged $25 million to the country over the next two years.

50. Employment generation remains a key priority of the Government. A joint initiative of UNDP, UNMIL and the World Bank, aimed at rehabilitating critical roads, has so far provided short-term employment opportunities for some 5,700 workers, including ex-combatants. In addition, some 768 community members and ex-combatants have benefited from the rehabilitation of secondary and feeder roads by UNMIL military engineers. With the support of the WFP food support to local initiatives programme and the Ministry of Public Works, UNMIL has also facilitated the employment of some 3,000 local community members in roadside brushing and other basic road repair works. Moreover, the Mission has facilitated the establishment of three manual quarry projects for the production of stones used for

road rehabilitation, which has provided jobs for about 350 people. UNMIL also continues to use its quick-impact projects to enhance employment creation.

VI. Humanitarian situation

51. Further improvement was recorded in the humanitarian situation during the reporting period. As at 1 March, 89,344 refugees had voluntarily returned to their places of origin with the assistance of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, while some 36,000 were reported to have returned spontaneously. This leaves some 107,348 refugees still to be repatriated from various countries in the subregion. There are also 16,168 refugees residing in Liberia from Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and other countries. Meanwhile, the humanitarian community has reviewed its contingency plans for responding to any possible humanitarian emergency that may arise as a result of the fragile political and security situation in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire.

52. During the period under review, the number of functioning health facilities increased from 280 to 389. Despite this improvement, access to basic health care remains inadequate, in particular in remote counties. The majority of health-care facilities are being operated by non-governmental organizations, some of which plan to cease operations in Liberia later in 2007. The Government's efforts to deliver adequate health care have continued to be constrained by limited resources and the dearth of qualified health personnel.

53. To date, the 2006 United Nations consolidated appeal for Liberia has received 50 per cent of the estimated $145 million required for humanitarian activities. Some $117 million will be needed to address humanitarian needs in 2007, including the delivery of basic social services, the provision of security and productive livelihoods for returnee communities and strengthening the capacity of civil society and local authorities. I appeal to donors to generously provide the required assistance to meet these needs, which are outlined in the 2007 Common Humanitarian Action Plan for Liberia.

VII. Gender

54. The Mission's Gender Adviser Unit continued to facilitate the development of a mission-wide action plan, with benchmarks, for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. Through its membership in various committees and working groups, the Unit gave technical, logistical and financial support for the implementation of a national action plan in the areas of rule of law, the protection of human rights and the promotion of women in decision-making. During the reporting period, the United Nations Gender Theme Group, which is comprised of representatives of the United Nations country team, including UNMIL, developed an action plan to support the Government in elaborating its national strategy on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), the development of a gender policy and the preparation of a report on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in Liberia. The Unit also conducted gender analysis training for UNMIL personnel.

VIII. HIV/AIDS

55. The UNMIL HIV/AIDS Unit collaborated with the Mission's integrated training cell to conduct awareness training and sensitization, as well as personal risk assessment sessions, as part of the induction training for military, police and civilian personnel. The Unit also continued to promote HIV/AIDS awareness through its participation in a live UNMIL Radio phone-in programme. In addition, it collaborated with UNICEF, the Foundation for International Dignity, the Young Men's Christian Association and the Right to Play organization to conduct awareness workshops on HIV/AIDS for youths residing in Montserrado County.

IX. Personnel conduct and discipline

56. The Mission's Conduct and Discipline Unit continued to focus on developing strategies to prevent, identify, report on and effectively respond to all categories of United Nations personnel misconduct. It also focused on strategies to ensure the implementation of the Secretary-General's zero tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse through training, awareness-raising and attention to welfare concerns of all categories of United Nations personnel. In 2006, the Mission trained 3,360 personnel in conduct-related issues, including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. During the reporting period, UNMIL hired a local consultant to conduct awareness training for 30 national non-governmental organizations, which are expected to participate in the implementation of the Mission's outreach programmes to local communities close to United Nations facilities. The Unit has also continued to participate in coordinating the national sexual exploitation and abuse awareness campaign launched by the Government in December 2006.

57. During the period under review, seven allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were reported. All reported cases are being investigated by the Office of Internal Oversight Services. UNMIL will continue to publicize the outcome of completed investigations.

X. Public information

58. The public information component of UNMIL continued to support the priority programmes of the Mission, as well as those of the United Nations agencies, the Government of Liberia and civil society, which are aimed at consolidating peace and stability, encouraging reconciliation and promoting national recovery. The Mission also organized several sports and cultural events to promote national reconciliation. The sports for peace programme, which is expected to bring Liberians throughout the country together to play football, volleyball and kickball, was launched on 2 March by my Special Adviser on Sports for Development and Peace, Adolf Ogi. UNMIL also organized a musical concert in Tubmanburg, Bomi County, to sensitize the populace about sexual exploitation and abuse. The Mission has also continued to work with other partners in developing the capacity of the national media by providing training for print and electronic media personnel.

XI. Observations

59. Liberia continues to make steady progress in consolidating peace, stability and democracy, as well as in promoting economic recovery, with the sustained support of its international partners. I am pleased to note that the Government remains focused on the important priorities of ensuring economic recovery; fighting corruption; implementing the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program; reforming the security sector; regaining control and efficient management of its natural resources; strengthening the capacity of its institutions, parastatals and agencies; and consolidating its authority. In addition, the Government has implemented structural and fiscal reforms; drafted critical legislation; and transparently reviewed contracts and concessions entered into by the former National Transitional Government of Liberia.

60. Notwithstanding these encouraging developments, Liberia still faces significant reconstruction and development challenges arising from 14 years of civil strife, including pervasive poverty, food insecurity, high unemployment, massive illiteracy, debilitated infrastructure and the inadequate delivery of basic services, including potable water, health services and education. In addition, a number of tasks that are critical to the consolidation of peace in the country have yet to be completed, including the reintegration of ex-combatants, the resettlement of returnees, the reform of the judiciary and the extension of the rule of law throughout the country.

61. The Government also needs to accelerate the development of a national security strategy and framework, as well as the training and restructuring of the new army. While some progress has been made in restructuring and training the police, vehicles, communications equipment and accommodation are needed to sustain their deployment to the interior of the country. I trust that donors will contribute generously towards these pressing requirements, which will help the Government to strengthen the rule of law.

62. The potential threat to stability presented by the unemployed, including former combatants and deactivated security personnel, remains a source of serious concern. To address this threat, labour-intensive employment opportunities must be provided in the short term, while sustainable employment opportunities generated through a revitalized economy will need to be created in the long term. I appeal to donors to assist the Government in generating these employment opportunities. I also urge international partners to intensify efforts to provide former combatants, who have not yet participated in reintegration programmes, with reintegration opportunities.

63. The positive expressions of support by international partners during the Liberia Partners' Forum were very encouraging. I was particularly gratified by the commitment made towards helping the Government find solutions to clear its debts with international financial institutions. It is hoped that the partners will follow through on these commitments so that Liberia's multilateral debt arrears can be cleared in a timely manner.

64. In my address to the Liberia Partners' Forum, I stressed the importance of assisting the Government in building the capacity of its State institutions and in restoring effective State administration of the country's natural resources so that the remaining sanctions may be lifted. In providing our collective support to meet these

and other urgent priorities, it will be important to protect the fundamental human rights of every Liberian, promote gender equality and foster national reconciliation.

65. It is a matter of concern that the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is progressing rather slowly owing to a number of management, personnel and budgetary challenges. These problems need to be resolved on an urgent basis so that the Commission can continue its valuable work of ensuring lasting peace in Liberia. I would like to express appreciation to the international partners who have so far provided assistance to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and appeal to them to continue to work closely with the Commission in the implementation of its mandate.

66. The recent tensions in the House of Representatives have diverted the attention of legislators away from the very crucial national reconstruction and recovery work of the country. Members of the House should work constructively together to overcome these difficulties and to settle all disputes within the appropriate legal frameworks.

67. At the same time, it is important to continue to pay attention to the potential external threats to peace and stability in Liberia. In particular, the unpredictable situations in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea create an environment that poses additional challenges to efforts to build sustained stability in Liberia. The ongoing cooperation between UNMIL and UNOCI, as well as with the Sierra Leonean and Guinean armed forces, in patrolling the border areas needs to be complemented by commensurate policies at the highest political levels to promote good neighbourly relations and build mechanisms for stability in the border areas and the wider subregion. I am therefore greatly encouraged by the growing cooperation among the Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in addressing these border issues.

68. In the light of the challenges outlined above, and given the limited progress made in meeting the benchmarks for the consolidation and drawdown of the Mission, I recommend the extension of the mandate of UNMIL for a period of 12 months, until 31 March 2008.

69. In conclusion, I would like to commend the people and Government of Liberia, my Special Representative, Alan Doss, and all UNMIL military and civilian personnel for the progress made in the country during the reporting period. I would also like to thank all troop- and police-contributing countries, ECOWAS, the African Union, the International Contact Group on the Mano River Basin, United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, humanitarian organizations, multilateral and bilateral donors, as well as international and local non-governmental organizations, for their important contributions and support to the peace consolidation process in Liberia.

Annex

United Nations Mission in Liberia: military and civilian police strength (at 1 March 2007)

	Military				
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Argentina					8
Bangladesh	17	12	3 183	3 212	29
Benin	4	1		5	
Bolivia	1	1		2	
Bosnia and Herzegovina				0	11
Brazil		1		1	
Bulgaria	2			2	
China	5	8	557	570	18
Croatia		3		3	
Czech Republic	3			3	5
Denmark	2			2	
Ecuador	4	1		5	
El Salvador	3			3	2
Ethiopia	14	7	2 536	2 557	
Egypt	8			8	4
Fiji				0	30
Finland		2		2	
France		1		1	
Gambia	5			5	32
Germany			18	18	5
Ghana	10	4	847	861	40
India					125
Indonesia	3			3	
Ireland		6	396	402	
Jamaica				0	8
Jordan	8	7	115	130	140
Kenya	1	3		4	26
Kyrgyzstan	4			4	3
Malawi		2		2	19
Mali	2	1		3	
Moldova	3	1		4	
Malaysia	10			10	
Namibia	3	3	857	863	6
Nepal	3	2	40	45	256
Niger	1			1	

	Military				
Country	*Military observers*	*Staff officers*	*Troops*	*Total*	*Civilian police*
Nigeria	19	14	1 943	1 976	157
Norway				0	10
Pakistan	16	9	2 732	2 757	28
Paraguay	3	1		4	
Peru	3	3		6	
Philippines	3	5	164	172	28
Poland	2			2	3
Republic of Korea	1	1		2	
Romania	3			3	
Russian Federation	6			6	10
Rwanda					15
Samoa				0	14
Senegal	3	3	600	606	
Serbia	6			6	7
Sri Lanka				0	10
Sweden	0	4	231	235	12
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia					1
Togo	2	1		3	
Turkey				0	33
Uganda				0	21
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland		3		3	
Ukraine	3	1	300	304	13
Uruguay				0	3
United States of America	7	6		13	7
Yemen				0	4
Zambia	3			3	27
Zimbabwe				0	31
Total	**196**	**117**	**14 519**	**14 832**	**1 201**

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.
Located in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the Military Guard Force (MGF) company of the Special Court of Sierra Leone (SCSL) has been under UNMIL command since 1 December 2005.
UNMIL
Deployment
March 2007
Sector boundary
International boundary
Provincial boundary
National capital
Airport
Main road
Railroad
0 20 40 60 80 km
0 10 20 30 40 50 mi
SIERRA LEONE
LIBERIA
GUINEA
CÔTE D'IVOIRE
Atlantic Ocean
Monrovia
Sector 1
Sector 2
Sector 3
Sector 4
MONTSERRADO
GBARPOLU
LOFA
BONG
NIMBA
MARGIBI
GRAND BASSA
RIVER CESS
GRAND GEDEH
SINOE
RIVER GEE
GRAND KRU
MARYLAND
UNMIL HQ
IRELAND & SWEDEN (Quick Reaction Force)
MONGOLIA (SCSL - Freetown)
PHILIPPINES
BANGLADESH (Force Reserve)
CHINA
NEPAL
JORDAN
NIGERIA
NAMIBIA
PAKISTAN
UKRAINE
BANGLADESH
ETHIOPIA
SENEGAL
OTHER DEPLOYMENT
Winsue
Phebe
Totota
Salala
Gbopolu
CAMP SCHEIFFELIN
Camp Scheiffelin
Map No. 4211 Rev. 14 UNITED NATIONS
March 2007 (Colour)
Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section